

OLD YEAR, FAREWELL!



AREWELL, farewell, the best of friends must part. And as a token of how dear thou art. How fond and dear, Old Year, Old Year, Here take a glint of gold from out my hair. A shade of rose from cheek and lip, and there Sprinkle a touch of snow before you go, Old Year, before you go.

Good-by, God-speed, all earthly things must end. One look into your fading eyes, my friend. So fond and dear, Old Year, Old Year, There's a mild regret within my heart in place of pain. All that was sweet in thee shall once again. In memory live and make me glad, Old Year; then why be sad?

Now that we're parting, I'm impelled to say, What I've in secret thought for many a day— Yet still I love you, dear Old Year. You've always worn a somewhat somber face. You've never had the winsome sprightly grace. That I remember in your foregone kin, Old Year, that I have ushered in.

Your stay was shorter, too, it seems to me. Than that of former years was wont to be— Oh, fond and dear Old Year, Old Year, Mayhap for me all time is near complete, And toward the end you're hast'ning with glad feet. Then speed, no longer stay, Old Year, go swift thy way!

HANS BRYNJULSON'S MORTGAGE

A Dakota night. The prairie, wrapped in mysterious shadows, rolls away to the south and vanishes among the ghostly stars. Through the sedges of the marsh the night winds sigh fitfully; and the frogs, from their reedy haunts, croak a hoarse accompaniment.

For Hans Brynjulson, smoking in the door of his "shack," and looking out over the moonlit plain and coteaux, there is but one word in the heart, one song on the lips of nature.

Christina! Well, indeed, did Hans remember her braids of golden hair—her sparkling eyes—the fair beauty of her northern face. They had parted—but that was long ago. "You will make your fortune in America, Hans. Be brave. I will come when you want me. God be with you, my dear one!"

Not a day passed but these words leaped from the memory to the heart of Hans Brynjulson. They were often on his lips than were his prayers.

The first year, the dreaded southwest wind scorched and withered a field almost ready for the reaper, but Hans saved enough grain to plant the land again. The second year, crops were backward, and the wheat was "hipped" by frost and shriveled and blackened in the husk. The third year crops were beaten to the ground by hail.

How had Hans contrived to keep body and soul together during these years of trial? By mortgaging his possessions. L. S. claim, his horses, his farming implements—everything—had been laid under contribution to tide him over the hard times.

In his hands he had a letter. It was dark and he could not read it—but this was unnecessary. He had conned it word for word until he could have recited it by note. The letter was from Christina. She told her lover, in simple words, that she could not remain away from him longer. A longer absence, for her, was worse than death. Surely, her willing hands would prove a mighty factor in his hard life. The meaneast drudgery at his side and for him would be happiness for her. The Stockholm sailed on the 1st of December for New York. Could he not send her money to pay her passage? If so, she would come third-class all the way. God bless him for the faithful lover that he was!

Poor Hans! He had never written Christina of his heroic struggle with fate. What should he do now? Tell her all? No, no. His heart rebelled against such a course. Fair, loyal Christina! He would send her the passage money. But where was he to get it? He started suddenly to his feet. The moonbeams, striking his haggard face, wreathed it with a strange beauty.

"Ay shall do it," he murmured in his broken English; "ay shall see Messer Yonson in da mornin'!"

"Say, do you know what that 'ere crazy Swede from Pony Gulch has been up to?"

Chris Larkin, the blacksmith, dropped the head of his hammer on the anvil and supported himself on the handle with his burd, sinewy arms as he addressed this sentence to Cal Higgins, a farmer.

"What now?" asked Higgins. "What's the latest?"

"Gone an' mortgaged himself to Lawyer Johnson for \$100."

"Tain't possible!"

"Tis, too—but it can't be legal."



LO'KIN' FR LITTLE CHRISTINA.

"S'pose the Swede can't pay up when the mortgage is due?"

"Johnson'll foreclose, I s'pose."

"Then he'd own the Swede, hey?"

"More'n likely. Then he'd hire him out by the day, ye see, an' git his money back in that way."

"When's the mortgage due?"

"New Year's Day."

"What did the Swede want the money for?"

"Dunno. He went over to the post-office, bought a money order an' sent away ev'ry plugged cent!"

"Don't that beat all!" exclaimed Higgins, disgustedly; "that's jest like them Swedes. Some fool speculation, I'll bet a copper."

It was Christmas Day. In the nooks and crannies of Wells County there was a bare suggestion of snow. The white flakes were unusually backward, that year, in taking possession of the country and the settlers shook their heads forebodingly as they spoke of a "green Christmas" and a "fat churchyard."

"Don't worry, Chris," remarked the conductor of the passenger train that had thundered up to the station, "we'll have a regular blizzard to make up for this. When the snow comes, it'll be on us all in a heap—see if it ain't. What's the matter, my man?"

The last words were spoken to Hans Brynjulson, who had touched the conductor on the arm.

"Ay been lo'kin' fr mae little Christina by dees train, but Ay can't see her, no place—" began poor Hans.

"Ah," went on the conductor, with a laugh, "some girl from the States that you're going to marry! No—there were no passengers for Sykeston."

Hans turned with a sigh. The postmaster was walking off with the mail-pouch, and the forlorn Swede followed. He had a vague thought that the mail-pouch might contain some news for him.



like so many spirits of peace, over the quiet village.

A man, reeling through the semi-darkness, heard the song and stopped to listen. As the last bar of the song died away, its cadence was broken by a discordant groan. A moment later as Lawyer Johnson with his wife and little daughter came out of the church, he nearly stumbled over the form of a man lying prone upon the ground.

nothing is known. The lawyer's daughter could not tell. She started home, she said, was overtaken by the storm and finally grew bewildered. Struggling vainly for what seemed an interminably long time she had finally sunk senseless and exhausted into the snow.

When found she was snugly wrapped in the lawyer's fur coat while a pair of thin, rigid arms folded her close as though to protect her from the drifting flakes. And when the snow was brushed from Hans Brynjulson's icy face, congealed tears were found in the eye-lashes, and about the mouth—mystery unsolvable—there hovered a smile. Happiness crowned with tears!

Perhaps they were tears of joy; perhaps the boisterous winter winds became summer zephyrs in the ears of Hans Brynjulson and whispered to him the word, "Christina, Christina;" perhaps this also was the burden of the snow-flakes as they rustled down over him and wove their spotless woof into the web of his life.

Lawyer Johnson caused it to be duly known that Hans Brynjulson had cancelled his mortgage and it was Mrs. Johnson's own hand that gave the document to the fire.—W. W. Cook, in Detroit Free Press.

A Christmas Surprise. She asked her experienced father, "Dear papa, tell me, I pray, What shall I give my husband To surprise him on Christmas Day?"

"A present for Clarence?" he murmured.



Half an hour later the letters and parcels had been assorted and the postmaster began distributing them to the waiting throng. There were Christmas presents and loving tidings from dear ones in the East and many a pioneer's face wreathed with happiness as the letters were read or the presents tucked snugly away in warm breast pockets.

"Here's something for you, Hans," called the postmaster, and the pale-faced man who had been lingering near the door, doubtful but expectant, started forward with a smile and an outstretched hand. That handwriting! The letter was from Christina!

The envelope was hastily torn open and a pair of happy blue eyes began perusing the text. Suddenly, the happy light vanished from the face. Hans Brynjulson's limbs grew rigid and he lurched over against the counter with a moan of anguish.

English words, even in a free translation, are powerless to catch the pathetic vein that ran through Hans Brynjulson's letter, but here are its contents, done into our own language:

On board S. S. Stockholm, Dec. 10.

My Dear One: When you read this, my faithful love, she who writes it will be with you—but in the spirit. I am to die, the ship's doctor says, and I thank God that I have the strength to send you this last word. I would that Our Heavenly Father had spared me to work for you, but since this is impossible, work doubly hard for yourself. Be brave, dear Hans, for my sake. Be patient and you will be fortunate. God tempers the wind to the stricken children and he will not forget thee, my darling. My strength ebbs fast—a last farewell.

CHRISTINA.

As the shades of evening crept over the sky and brought out, one by one, the cold, clear-cut stars, the words of a Christmas carol floated through the doors of the little Sykeston church and settled.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's Hans Brynjulson!"

"Let him lie where he is," said Mrs. Johnson; "he's drunk, no doubt."

"Well, drunk or sober, if he lies here he'll freeze. It means a hundred dollars to me," said the lawyer, grimly; "ah, he's reviving. Come, come, my man, don't you know where you are?"

"Messer Yonson?" returned Hans interrogatively.

"Yes, yes; get up and follow us. You'll freeze to death lying there. You mustn't freeze, you know. It wouldn't be treating me fair. You understand why, eh? You can sleep in my barn to-night."

The day after New Year's dawned with a calm that would have been foreboding, had not unusual weather so far marked the winter in Wells County.

Little Bessie Johnson went to school in the morning and she had been gone from home an hour when a black cloud, rifted with wind, appeared in the northwest. Like a great ominous banner, battle-scarred and brushing its ragged streamers across the sky, the cloud came on with racehorse speed. And then came the blast in all its fury. Helter-skelter, here and there, blew the wild white flakes; rushing around the corner of Lawyer Johnson's house with an angry roar, the bits of snow played hide-and-seek among the eaves and then hurried away in the mad gambols of a whirlwind.

"Goodness me, S'las," said Mrs. Johnson, turning from the window, "I can't see a yard away. What will become of Bessie?"

"She'll be all right—don't worry. The teacher will not let the scholars leave the schoolhouse until the blizzard is over." Fears, however, if long enough-persist-

"Put this on," he said. Reaching the schoolhouse in safety, Hans found it occupied by the teacher and a few frightened pupils. But Bessie Johnson was not there. At the first appearance of the cloud in the northwest the girl had persisted in a determination to start home. The teacher had not made a very serious attempt to thwart



"IT'S HANS BRYNJULSON!"

that resolve, feeling, perhaps, that she would have ample time to cover the distance before the storm came. Hans Brynjulson received the information without comment and once more vanished into the storm.

Of what he did after this absolutely

His mind with past years away. As he thought of his wife's dear presents For which he had had to pay.

"This is sure to surprise him, daughter. If there's anything that will A gold watch and chain to give him— And include a receipted bill."

Judge.

New Year Advice.

Don't wait for the wagon while the walking is good. Don't grieve over spilt milk while there's one cow left in the pasture.

Don't say the world is growing worse when you are doing nothing to make it better. Don't tell the world your troubles. You can't borrow ten dollars on them.

Don't let the grass grow under your feet. The cows can't get at it there.

To the Children. Hear Kris Kringle with his bells— Christmas bells! What a world of merriment their melody foretells!

How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, In the joy air of night! While the stars, that oversprinkle All the heavens, seem to twinkle, With their stockings full of light; Keeping time, time, time, In a merry Christmas rhyme.

To the titillation that so musically swells From his bells, bells, bells, bells, Bells, bells, bells, From the jingling and the tinkling of his bells.

Equal to the Occasion.

"Oh, don't!" she exclaimed, as he attempted to take a kiss; "wait till Christmas and you can kiss me under the mistletoe."

"That's all right," he said; "I'll kiss you at Christmas under the mistletoe, but just now I'm going to kiss you under the nose."



THE Christmas tree should be carefully selected, and always be sure to get one which has been cut under cold weather has set in.

Sometimes those who offer the trees for sale cut them down in the early fall. This is very well if there is no dry, warm weather afterwards. To determine how recently a tree has been cut insist upon seeing it shaken—if the needles fall don't take it. To trim well, a tree should be round and symmetrical in form, wide around the bottom, growing to a point at the top.

Balsam pine trees are the prettiest and most expensive. A handsome one, about ten feet high, costs \$5. These trees come from Vermont, the Catskill Mountains, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. They have the largest and brightest needles, have the limbs grow closer than on any other, and are very thick up to the top. Spruce trees are the most used because, being plentiful, they are much cheaper, being half the price of a balsam pine. In color they are not so green. They come from Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine and the Catskill Mountains.

There is nothing distinctly new in the tree decorations. The fancy pendants are used in great profusion. Five hundred of assorted colors would not be too many on a good-sized tree. These are round, oval, frosted, brilliant and tinsel covered. Some represent birds, grapes, bells, fruit, horns and fish. Strings of brilliant colored balls add greatly to the appearance of the tree when draped from branch to branch. Frosted icicles of different colored glasses are effective, hung from the tip of each branch.

A fancy tree-top piece, either of bright red or silver, is indispensable. Then there are tinsel comets to hang through the branches, strings of tinsel and tinsel tassels. Something new is asbestos, which, when distributed over the tree, looks like snow. There should be lots of cornucopias filled with candy, and snapping mottoes with fancy colored caps or whistles and tiny horns inside. There are many decorations in the form of Brownies. These are not pretty, but they are the fad. Be sure you have plenty of candles. Six dozen won't be too many. After you are all through trimming, take handfuls of loose tinsel and spray it all over the tree.

A Christmas Scheme.

A lady who was shopping saw her husband examining pocketbooks at a showcase in another part of the store. When he had gone she approached the saleswoman in that department.

"Did he get the one I wanted?"

"Yes, the one with the silver horse-shoe. I told him it was the best and would just suit."

"You're a jewel. I feared he would get something I didn't want. Thank you ever so much."

The husband had gone to his favorite drug store, when he asked:

"Has my wife been here?"

"Yes," said the clerk, with a grin. "Did she get a toothbrush or a box of cigars for my Christmas present?"

"She looked at cigars."

"Ha! I know the brand—\$2 a hundred. Well, if she buys a box change them to my regular brand, and I'll pay the difference—see?"

And the druggist—saw.

A New Year Song.

Who comes dancing over the snow, His little soft feet all bare and rosy? Open the door, though the wild winds blow; Take the child in and make him cozy.

Take him in, and hold him dear; He is the wonderful New Year.

Open your heart, be it sad or gay, Welcome him there and use him kindly; For you must carry him, yea or nay, Carry him with shut eyes so blindly, But whether he bringeth joy or fear, Take him! God sends him—this good New Year.

A Slight Delay.

Mrs. Pinkerly—The boy has just come with that lovely Christmas present I got for you today, dear. He is waiting in the hall now.

Pinkerly—How kind (kiss) and thoughtful of you, dear. (Kiss, kiss). I am just dying to see what it is. (Impatiently) Why don't you have the boy bring it up?

Mrs. Pinkerly (embarrassed)—The fact is—er—darling, it has come C. O. D.—Life.

A Small Boy's Complaint.

I don't like the month of December As much as I possibly should, Because when Christmas is coming Small boys must be awfully good.

And while long division ain't easy, And spelling is poky and slow, This behaving for three weeks 'fore Christmas Is the hardest old task that I know.—Harper's Bazar.

Measure for Measure.

"It's not the right sort of feeling, perhaps, but at Christmas I like to give just as valuable presents as I receive."

"So do I. My wife is going to give me a hundred-dollar dressing gown, and I am going to give her a hundred-dollar check to pay for it."—Life.

Is or Are.

Ah, Santa Claus, come in, come in, Your welcome is beyond all measure, We're glad to have you come and stay, Your Christmas presents are a pleasure.

Watching for Santa Claus.

